"Get ready for plain packaging" is the theme of World No Tobacco Day 2016, which takes place every year on 31 May. This year, WHO is highlighting the importance of plain packaging as an effective public health intervention to reduce the demand for tobacco.

A “plain” tobacco package is one that displays brand names and product names in a standard colour and font style, without using logos, colours, brand images or promotional information (inside and/or outside the packaging).

WHO is calling on countries to consider adopting laws to implement plain packaging on all tobacco products, be it smoked or smokeless. The specific goals for this year’s campaign include:

highlighting the role of plain packaging as part of a comprehensive, multisectoral approach to tobacco control;

facilitating policy development by countries and the globalization of plain packaging by providing informative, compelling and persuasive information;

encouraging countries to strengthen packaging and labelling measures and restrictions on advertising, promotion and sponsorship as they work towards plain packaging in a step-wise approach;

supporting countries and civil society against tobacco industry interference in political processes leading to adoption of plain packaging laws.

Tobacco is the only legal consumer product that kills when used exactly as intended by the manufacturer. Projections show that one billion people will lose their lives as a result of tobacco-related illnesses this century. World No Tobacco Day is WHO's opportunity to save lives and to limit the damage caused by tobacco use.

Key messages for this year's World No Tobacco Day

Plain packaging:

reduces the demand for tobacco

influences the intention of smokers to quit

reduces the attractiveness of tobacco products

restricts use of tobacco packaging as a form of tobacco advertising and promotion

limits misleading packaging and labelling

increases the effectiveness of health warnings.

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